2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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When close to the enemy, each member of the party unwrapped his war medicine in preparation for the real battle. While painting themselves and putting on their charms and other regalia, the warriors sang.[9] Lame Bull, for instance, had a "medicine" war bonnet and there was a special song without words which he sang as he donned it; if there was time, the rest of the party danced while he sang and drummed.[10] Other songs might be sung immediately before going into battle.[11] The words of one such song imply: "If I am killed it doesn't matter; women will bear other children to take my place; I am ready to die." Some individuals, too, had special songs of their own to be sung as they made the charge against the enemy.[12]

The most daring men in battle were said to have been those who wished to die. Men who were grieving over the loss of loved ones were believed to have been especially prone to this indirect method of suicide. Others took this way of gloriously ending their lives out of a sense of pique, or in order to vindicate their honor. In this latter case it was customary for a man who had something discreditable to account for, either on his own part or on the part of some member of his family, to publicly announce that he was about to die by singing the "brave-song" or "death-song" as he rode around the camp circle. This indicated that he would seek the earliest opportunity of losing his life at the hands of the enemy while accomplishing some particularly outstanding war-deed.[13]

It was recognized that even the bravest of men might experience acute fear during battle. "Their souls kind of left them on account of the danger. They looked different from normal and their minds seemed not quite clear. Lame Bull used to say that the effect was quite similar to that of drinking too much whiskey—

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[9] Kroeber, 1908, pp. 192–93 gives details and illustrations of supernatural paraphernalia for war. War medicines, illustrating those which had belonged to Bull Lodge, are presented here, Plate 3, courtesy of Richard Pohrt.

[10] The song recorded as No. 76 is Lame Bull's and is said to be typical of this class of songs.

[11] Two were recorded as No. 16 and No. 17.

[12] Lame Bull's song was recorded as No. 77.

[13] Two such "brave-songs" were recorded as No. 111 and No. 112. See also p. 191.

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and spectacular war deed before she granted her favors to him.[9] If he returned, she was supposed to keep her word, accepting him as her lover. In the other type of situation, it was taken for granted that a woman would succumb to the pleas of a man who had publicly announced his intention of virtually committing suicide. Such a man, by singing the "brave-song" as he circled the camp, indicated that he would seize the first opportunity thereafter to encounter the enemy but make no effort to defend himself.[10]

According to a number of stories that are told, it was not uncommon that a woman committed suicide when her lover failed to return from war. That this actually happened, in some cases at least, is vouched for by the following factual account given by Singer. "White people, on one occasion, invited some Gros Ventres to visit them. All of the people, whose lodges were near to that of my grandmother, went, except one woman. This woman was scraping a skin when word was announced that a certain young man had been killed at war. My grandmother, noticing that the sound of scraping had stopped, thought that this woman was resting, and after a little while started over to visit her. On the way, however, she heard a shot, and when she got to that lodge she found that this woman was dead. She had first dressed herself nicely in her best clothes and had then shot herself, pulling the trigger of the gun by means of a string attached to her toe. My grandmother had suspected an affair between this woman and the young man who had lost his life at war, but she hadn't known for sure until this woman committed suicide. In those days a woman would have kept such an affair secret. (Now since women have the law to protect them from their husbands, wives just don't care and boldly run around with anybody they fancy and talk back to their husbands, and everybody knows all about it.) But anyway, that woman was a good worker,—she was working for her husband when that bad news came about the death of her lover,—and of course her husband mourned for her."

It was said that women who had been cast aside by their hus-

[9] "This custom is said to have led to the death of many young men," Kroeber, 1908, p. 180.

[10] For further details on the "brave-song," see p. 92.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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until someone went after them and talked to them and persuaded them to eat and drink some water.

The most extravagant expressions of grief were expected on the part of close relatives of men killed at war. It was under such circumstances that the mourners tore off their clothes and gashed their arms and legs. The blood was not washed off and the wounds were allowed to fester, often leaving ugly scars. It was maintained that in mourning the Gros Ventres did not cut off fingers,—that was done only in fulfilment of a vow.

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If a brave young man were killed by the enemy, his parents went even further in the expression of their grief, and sometimes had to be restrained from committing suicide. The father could show additional sorrow by cutting the manes and tails of his son's horses, which he then led about as he wandered on the hills for four days and nights, crying and mourning. The following case illustrates the behavior of an elder brother in mourning for a younger one, but may be somewhat exceptional in that the former felt responsible for the latter's death.

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"Little Man, also known as Deafie, was on his way home with his younger brother. They had been on a friendly visit to the Crow. There were others in the party and one evening while they were camped, the younger brother had a dream. The next morning he told them: 'I had a bad dream. I dreamed I got killed.' One of the older men said: 'All right. We will stop here awhile so we can make a sweat-lodge and we will smudge.' (That is what they did when they wanted to prevent something bad from happening.) But Little Man told them that, although the rest of them might believe in dreams, he did not, and he insisted that they move on. The old man couldn't say anything more. As they were going along that same day, Little Man was scouting ahead and sighted the enemy. The Gros Ventre party separated, Little Man going with one group, his brother with the other. The brother happened to go right into the midst of the Assiniboine and was killed. The others heard the shots, but when they got there, Little Man found his brother lying dead. He then tore off all his clothes and would have committed suicide by dashing singlehanded after the enemy had not his brother-in-law grabbed him and held him back. When they got home, Little Man felt so badly that he cut off his beautiful

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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self was practically committing suicide, so in one sense he meant himself. But in another, he meant that the case of the others, or many of them, was hopeless. He was telling them that if they did not run they would not escape home, but that even if they did run he was doubtful if they would make home safely. They saw and heard him, and a few escaped and survived, but many, including Little Weasel himself, were killed. When the survivors got back to camp they told what had happened.

"Little Weasel, himself unmarried, had been engaged at the time in a love affair with a certain young married woman, the most beautiful in the tribe, and her husband knew about it. After the survivors returned, her husband said to her: 'I knew all about your affair with that young man but I did not scold or punish you. Now you should do what I tell you. You can mourn and cry for your lover, but do not do anything else. Think of our little boy (then four years old).' After saying this, he left their lodge to go hear details of the news of the battle.

"After he had left, his wife put on her best clothes, and combed her hair, and fixed herself up. Then taking with her a stout tough rope of sinew she went to the brow of a cliff where two trees stood, one leaning over the brink. She fastened one end of the rope around her neck and tied the other end to the leaning tree. Then she sang the same song her lover had sung around the mound, and with the same words. After finishing the song, she rattled her tongue and yelled as a woman used to do when celebrating the first coup her son had made.

"All the people, including her husband, ran out and he pleaded with her, but she did not listen to him. 'So sang,' she said, 'Little Weasel,' and rattling her tongue she jumped down, her head going one way and her body another."

According to The Boy, "the climax of the last important phase of the Kit-fox Dance came when the dancers paid their ceremonial grandfathers, and they paid them well, with many horses, etc." "On one occasion," he added, "one young Kit-fox Dancer did not have anything to give, and it just so happened that all his relatives were poor and did not come to his rescue. Therefore he did not pay his grandfather anything, and he was terribly embarrassed and

8:Flannery E-5 (1940-1948)1960 NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13



Her final rejoinder was such a witty and pointed one that everyone laughed heartily at her rival's expense. In this culture, of course, public ridicule was a far more effective retaliation than the biting and scratching that other women said frankly they would have indulged in when attacked.

Expression of emotional excess was institutionalized for the Gros Ventres, as for the rest of the Plains, in the bereavement situation. Upon the death of a husband, son, or father, a woman was expected to start wailing as soon as she heard the news, have her hair cut off, discard good clothes for old ragged ones, gash her arms and legs, go to the hills to mourn and cry, resisting for a time the pleas of her relatives to return, and being watched lest she attempt suicide. Coming Daylight was only a young woman when she was first widowed and the mourning pattern was still in full vogue. It is certain from other evidence than Coming Dayling had a deep affection for this husband to whom she had been given as a child-bride and in whose kindly and indulgent treatment she had found a pleasant escape from the rigorous discipline of her grandmother. Nevertheless the public expression of her grief was minimal—no abandonment for her. Although her sister was sent on the hills with her to keep watch over her in the usual way, Coming Daylight was easily persuaded to return shortly though she herself was proud of the fact that she had stayed out so long that she actually had got a frozen toe! In later years when all that was left of the ritual was the wailing out on the hills, she lost the son whom she herself, and everybody else, acknowledged as her favorite. She had not been on the hills very long when she experienced a significant dream, as follows. She was in a lodge at the rear of which was a big pile of tobacco mixture and a pipe. The owner of the lodge filled the pipe and approached her. She was frightened because she didn't smoke. The owner of the lodge however told her: "Look at these people." She looked and saw many with their hair cut and their bodies bleeding from the gashes inflicted in grief. The man then told her: "That is in the past. Nowadays your only consolation is in smoking." So she accepted the pipe and, after smoking it, she was painted in ceremonial fashion by each of those other mourners. Then the owner of the lodge dismissed her saying: "Now, go home and don't ever go on the hills and mourn again. But always smoke if you want to." She went home right after this dream and when she told her husband of it he accepted it as valid and persuaded her sister to prepare for Coming Daylight her first real smoke. She maintained that the habit subsequently developed was actually a great comfort to her.

The final area with which we shall be concerned here is the war complex—a vital aspect of the old Plains culture. Gros Ventre women were allowed direct but limited participation in these activities in the sense that, while they would not join a party of men who were going on horse-raiding or revenge expeditions, if opportunity offered they might exhibit the same kind of bravery that a man should show and derive considerable status therefrom. For instance, if one of the enemy fell nearby, the women rushed out from camp to count coup, and to grab trophies with which to inaugurate the relationship known as "enemy-friends." Coming Daylight, however, was never one to indulge in this sport. She told of the one—and to her extremely distasteful—occasion on which her hand literally was forced. It seems that during a raid on their camp one of the enemy was shot and her husband scalped him. The victim was lying not far from her lodge and, as her husband dashed off to pursue the rest of the Assiniboine, he shouted for her to come out and see what was going on. Coming Daylight saw the man lying there, face down, covered with blood. He was not dead